

REMARKS

The Applicants have carefully reviewed and considered the Office Action of 12 July 2005. In response the Applicants amend the specification to correct typographical and transcription errors on pages 2 and 5. In addition, claims 1 and 13 are amended to more clearly patentably distinguish the present invention from the prior art.

More specifically, amended claim 1 reads on a liner/insulator including two layers of wet processed mat comprising thermoplastic polymer staple fibers and thermoplastic bicomponent fibers that are directly bonded together. No such structure is taught or suggested in U.S. Patent 5,616,408 Oleszczuk et al. or U.S. Patent 5,804,512 to Lickfield et al.

More specifically, the '408 and the '512 patents both relate to nonwoven laminate fabrics of identical structure. More specifically both the '408 and '512 patents disclose a three layer laminate wherein the inner ply 12 sandwiched between the outer plies 14 and 16 is made from meltblown microfibers. In particular the Examiner's attention is directed to the '408 patent at col. 2 lines 27-29, col. 3 lines 34-37, and col. 4 lines 53-55 and 64-65. In addition the Examiner's attention is directed to the '512 patent at col. 2 lines 29-31, col. 3 lines 46-48 and col. 4 lines 23-24.

Since amended claim 1 of this application requires the first and second layers of thermoplastic polymer staple fibers and thermoplastic bicomponent fibers to be directly bonded together, the claim cannot possibly read on a structure wherein a layer of microfibers are sandwiched between the two other layers as explicitly taught in the '408 and '512 references. Thus it is very clear that the '408 and '512 references do not anticipate the invention of amended claim 1 and any rejection of claim 1 under 35 USC 102 should be withdrawn.

It is equally clear from reviewing the '408 and '512 references as a whole that the sandwiching of a meltblown microfiber layer 12 between the two layers

14, 16 is a critical teaching or aspect of these references. Such a structure is contraindicated by amended claim 1 which requires that the first and second layers are directly bonded together. Accordingly, the '408 and '512 references actually teach away from the present invention and, therefore, do not provide the basis for a rejection of claim 1 under 35 USC 103. Thus it is clear that claim 1 patently distinguishes over these references and should be allowed.

Independent claim 13 is rejected upon the same grounds and is equally allowable for the same reasons. More specifically, amended independent claim 13 also provides that the first and second layers are bonded together directly. Such a structural recitation excludes the possibility of providing a layer of meltblown microfibers between the first and second layers of wet processed mat. Accordingly, claim 13 cannot possibly read upon the structures disclosed in the '408 and '512 patents. Further, the '408 and '512 patents explicitly teach away from the present invention by requiring a layer of meltblown microfibers sandwiched between other layers. As a consequence claim 13 very clearly patentably distinguishes over this art and should be allowed.

Claims 2-5 and 9-12 which depend from claim 1 and claims 14-15 and 19-22 which depend from claim 13 are equally allowable over the '408 and '512 references for the same reasons.


Claims 6-8, 16, 17 and 18 also patentably distinguish over the '408 and '512 patents when considered in further combination with U.S. Patent 4,813,948 to Insley. The Insley patent is cited for its teaching of providing layer thicknesses ranging from 0.02 to 4.0 cm. While the Applicants agree that the Insley patent suggests providing layers with thicknesses of between 0.2 to 4.0 cm, Insley does not otherwise address the shortcomings noted above with respect to the '408 and '512 references. In particular, the '408 and '512 references still explicitly teach providing a meltblown microfiber layer sandwiched between two other layers and as noted above, this structure actually teaches away from the present invention. Thus, when considered in combination, the '408 and '512 references

and Insley simply fail to provide a sound basis for the rejection of claims 6, 7, 8, 16, 17 and 18 and these claims should be allowed.

Finally, claim 23 very clearly patentably distinguishes over the '408 or '512 patent when considered in combination with U.S. Patent 6,548,431 to Bansal et al. or U.S. Patent 4,508,113 to Malaney. The Bansal and Malaney patents are cited for their disclosure relating to utilization of a bonding temperature within a range of about 100 to about 150 degrees C when bonding polyethylene. This teaching, however, fails to address the shortcoming noted above with respect to the '408 and '512 primary references. More specifically, the '408 and '512 references explicitly teach providing a microfiber layer sandwiched between two other layers. Such a structure teaches away from the present invention wherein the first and second layers of wet processed mat comprising thermoplastic polymer staple fibers and thermoplastic bicomponent fibers are directly bonded together. Accordingly, when considered in combination, the cited references fail to teach or suggest the invention set forth in claim 23 which patentably distinguishes over this art and should be allowed.

In summary, all the pending claims patentably distinguish over the prior art of record and should be formally allowed. Upon careful review and consideration it is believed the Examiner will agree with this proposition. Accordingly, the early issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited. Any fees required in connection with this Response may be debited to Deposit Account 50-0568.

Respectfully submitted,

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